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# KHMER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOREIGN CONTACTS UNDER SŪRYAVARMAN I

BY

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## *The Setting*

The social and economic conditions of medieval Cambodia are the least studied aspects in the history of that country despite the fact that very rich, though somewhat one-sided, information on socio-economic relations is contained in Khmer epigraphy<sup>1</sup>). The inscriptions which have been preserved are concerned, primarily, with fixing the property rights of various groups of persons. Most deal with the property of temples, but references to the relationship of the temples to government and the general population allow the reconstruction of political and social structures. While the early French historians were primarily interested in the political history of the Khmer empire, more recent research has examined the social organization of Cambodia. For example, an article by the French historian Hubert de Mestier du Bourg suggests that the rule of Sūryavarman I (1002-1050 A.D.) was critical in an organizational sense<sup>2</sup>). Based on his study of Khmer epigraphy, de Mestier du Bourg believes that the development of Khmer administration culminated in the reign of Sūryavarman—that the administrative growth of the Cambodian state which began in the ninth century achieved its fullest potential during the reign of this king. The result was a strong administrative core in the Angkor

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1) For this study the author has used the French translations of George Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge*. (henceforth *IC.*), parts 2-8, (Hanoi-Paris, 1942-1966).

2) H. de Mestier du Bourg, "La première moitié de XI<sup>e</sup> siècle au Cambodge: Suryavarman I<sup>er</sup>, sa vie et quelques aspects des institutions à son époque", *Journal Asiatique*, 258, 3-4 (1970), pp. 281-314.

region, which underlay the military, economic, and religious activities of the age.

One aspect of this consolidation has been studied by the Russian historian L. A. Sedov<sup>3</sup>). Sedov has examined the tenth and eleventh century consolidation of local “kin” or “personal” temples, which were the property of feudal families, into a structured relationship with ten large “central” temples which were administered by functionaries who were shadowy representatives of the state. These smaller “kin” temples were taxed on behalf of the larger central temples, and, Sedov believes, those who were operating the kin temples received certain ceremonial privileges in return. Such a systematic consolidation would have provided the government with a control over the economic activity of many of its “people”. Temples controlled land, the manpower on the land, and the land’s productive output. This centralized temple complex thus related land and population to the central capital of the state.

Religious development of the type defined by Sedov was an aid to economic development. De Mestier du Bourg notes in particular the intense religious and economic development of the Prāh Vihār region in the time of Sūryavarman I<sup>4</sup>). It may be that the extension of cultivated land in the tenth and eleventh centuries was connected to the endowment of religious establishments. Rich temples would have formed economic bases which could have been tapped for construction projects, the development of irrigation, rice production, etc.—projects which were healthy for the economy as a whole and which the central government could not always cover financially<sup>5</sup>). Military expenses could also have been paid for by localized economic development.

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3) L. A. Sedov, “On the Problem of the Economic System in Angkor Cambodia in the IX-XII Centuries”, *Narody Asii i Afriki, Istorii, Ekonomika, Kul'tura*, (ANSSSR, 1963), 6, pp. 73-81. The author used a translation of the Russian done by Antonia Glasse for Professor O. W. Wolters, Cornell University.

4) The growth of a Saivite cult in the Prāh Vihār area during this period could well be identified with Sūryavarman’s favor. See du Bourg, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

5) De Mestier du Bourg believes that this was the case in the construction of the Angkor complex. See du Bourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-307.

Those who participated in the development of the economy were personally thanked by the king, who bestowed honorary titles upon them <sup>6</sup>).

That general economic prosperity existed would seem to be reflected in an urban development that took place in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Checking the epigraphy of this period, most old names of towns appear in the epigraphy of Sūryavarman I, along with a relatively large number of new place names. Patterns become noticeable in the reign of Rājēndravarman II (944-968) and continue under Jayavarman V (968-1001), but reach their fullness only under Sūryavarman. For example, the epigraphy mentions only *twelve* place names ending in *-pura*, a Sanskrit term used to identify urban areas, during the reign of Jayavarman IV (928-942), *twenty-four* in the period of Rājēndravarman II, *twenty* under Jayavarman V, but *forty-seven*—more than double those of his immediate predecessors—in the reign of Sūryavarman I <sup>7</sup>). Similar patterns reflecting the economic and administrative development which took place under Sūryavarman can be provided by studying the use of *-grama* and other word endings denoting urban areas.

### *The Merchant in Tenth and Eleventh Century Cambodia*

The prosperity generated by the Khmer empire was shared by merchants who were active in the Khmer domain. Confining this examination to the epigraphy of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the author has found over twenty specific references to merchant activity spreading from the reign of Harṣavarman I (922) to that of Harṣavarman III (1071). Most of these are concentrated in the period 956-1055; the largest number fall in the reign of Sūryavarman I.

Merchants are identified in Khmer epigraphy as *kbloñ jnvāl* and *kbloñ jnvāl vanik*. These are compounds of the Khmer words *kbloñ* (“worker”) and *jnval*, resulting in the meaning “to work for money” <sup>8</sup>), and the

6) *IC.*, 5, p. 269.

7) Du Bourg, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

8) *IC.*, 3, p. 14, ff. 1.

Sanskrit word *vāṇija* (“merchant”). *Khloñ jnvāl vanik* were itinerant, or traveling merchants, while *khloñ jnvāl* were resident vendors<sup>9</sup>). In an inscription from Vāt Prāh Ēinkosei (968), a merchant quarter (*travāñ vanik*) is identified<sup>10</sup>). Here gold, precious stones, pearls, cloth goods, and “goods from China” were traded. Other inscriptions give reference to silk, cotton, and other cloth goods; spices; animals such as cows, buffalo, elephants, horses, and pigs; sandalwood; slaves; ceramics; precious stones; rice; and gold and silver as being among the commodities one could acquire from a merchant. The participation of itinerant merchants from foreign lands in the activities of Khmer commercial centers can be identified. A Cham merchant (Vāp Chāmpa) and a Vietnamese merchant (an *Yvan* of Kamvañ Tadiñ) sold goods along with local merchants (*khloñ jnvāl*) in the eastern area of Phum Mien (987)<sup>11</sup>). A little further west, at Tuol Pei (992), a China trader (Vāp China) was dealing in slaves, gold, silver and other goods<sup>12</sup>).

As has been suggested, the Khmer state took a definite interest in the economic activities of its domain. The epigraphy records several examples of merchants who personally served the state. Local merchants (*khloñ jnvāl*) are known to have served in the retinue of a district chief (*khloñ viṣaya*) as noted in an inscription from the reign of Udayādityavarman II (1050-1066)<sup>13</sup>). The nature of their service may be seen in an inscription from Bān T’āt T’ong (922), when the district chief (*khloñ viṣaya*) of the area called Dharmapura was required to collect gold, silver, and “precious objects of all sorts” to be offered to members of the royal family, he obtained them from four or five merchants who were residents of his district<sup>14</sup>). Similarly, the inscription of Tuol Pei (992) noted above is addressed to a noble (*mrātān*) requesting that he procure certain specified goods for the royal family from the merchant

9) There are several references to such local merchants who owned land. For example, see *IC.*, 3, pp. 11-16.

10) *IC.*, 4, pp. 108-139.

11) *IC.*, 6, pp. 183-186.

12) E. T. Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, (Paris, 1900), i, p. 443. This work is based on early French collections of Khmer epigraphy.

13) *IC.*, 5, pp. 270-271.

14) *IC.*, 7, p. 94-98.

Vāp China<sup>15</sup>). There are also two inscriptions from Bantāy Prāv which refer to traveling merchants (*kbloñ jnvāl vanik*) who were members of the king's retinue (*kamsten*). In the reign of Sūryavarman (1012), a *kbloñ jnvāl vanik*, identified as a member of the *kamsten*, made a gift of a "slave" and an "infant" to the local temple, as did other members of the retinue<sup>16</sup>). In 1071, Harṣavarman III's retinue included a *vanik* of Gañ Lampoh, who is stated to have been "*kbloñ vanik* to the *kamsten*"<sup>17</sup>). Many royal endowments to temples were transacted using merchants as intermediaries. For example, in a late tenth century inscription from Prasat Cār, several *kbloñ jnvāl* are mentioned as directing the sale of land for the royal retinue (*kamsten*), for which the buyer paid a quantity of money (silver and other precious objects) and clothing<sup>18</sup>).

Although the inscriptions record surveys of commercial activity by royal agents, there is no evidence of merchants being heavily taxed<sup>19</sup>). A strong king such as Sūryavarman I benefited merchant activity by establishing standards of weights and measures<sup>20</sup>). In return, Khmer kings probably expected certain services, in reality a form of taxation, such as those performed by the merchants who are named in the epigraphy. "Donations" to temples may have been encouraged by the Khmer government<sup>21</sup>). Worship services at "central temples", in which the state took a particular interest, required that scented woods, spices, gold and silver, and cloth goods be presented to the deity. As indicated in the epigraphy, these were acquired from merchants; in return the merchants were reimbursed with land, buffalo, rice, jewelry, and "slaves"<sup>22</sup>). This service relationship between merchants and Khmer kings is clarified in the late tenth century Prasat Cār inscription

15) Aymonier, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

16) *IC.*, 6, pp. 225-227.

17) *IC.*, 3, pp. 57-61.

18) *IC.*, 4, pp. 140-150.

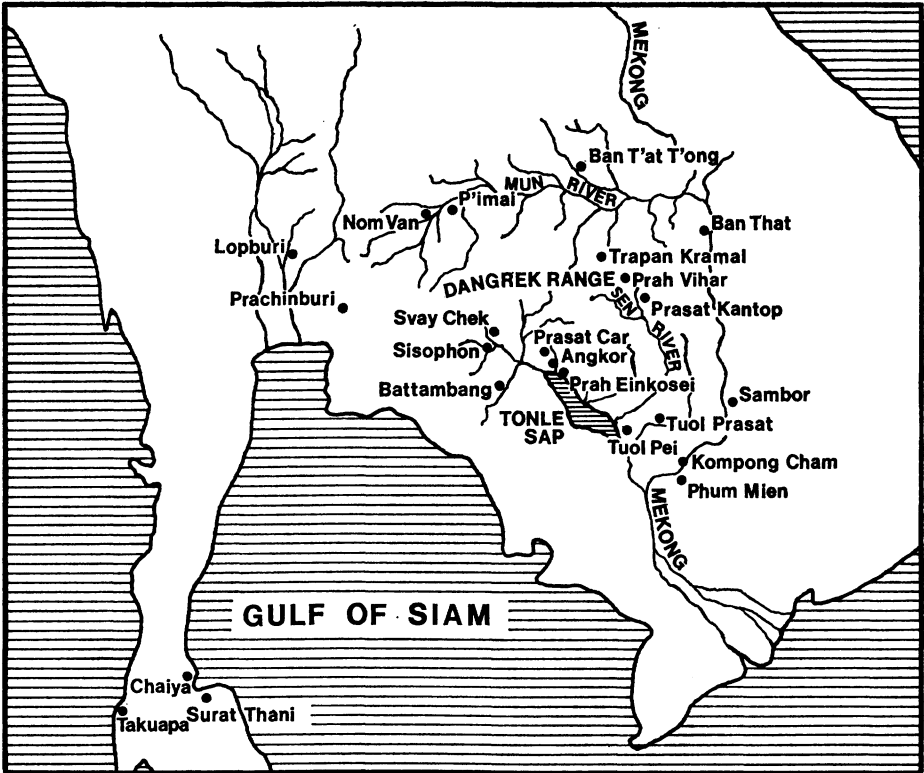
19) *IC.*, 3, pp. 16-24.

20) *IC.*, 3, pp. 16-24; *IC.*, 5, pp. 133-142.

21) Both du Bourg and Sedov believe that temple capital was an available source of revenue to Khmer rulers. See du Bourg, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

22) *IC.*, 5, pp. 133-142.

mentioned above, in which the local population, in receiving their payment of silver, cloth goods, and salt in exchange for land which they had been asked to sell, declared to the royal judge who sanctioned the transaction that “All these goods which we receive allow us to perform our royal service. The rest serves for our sustenance”<sup>23</sup>). The emphasis here is on *service* and not on pious “gift giving”.



The growth of the commercial economy may be further examined by mapping the distribution of Khmer inscriptions which refer to commercial activity. De Mestier du Bourg's article postulates that the center of Khmer administration during the tenth and eleventh centuries can be indicated by using Battambang, Sisophon, Prāḥ Vihār, Sambor, and Kompong Cham as the points for the construction of a pentagon,

23) *IC.*, 4, pp. 149-150.

the interior of which was the Khmer heartland<sup>24</sup>). As depicted by du Bourg, the reign of Sūryavarman I brought the extension of Khmer administration west of this core to the region of Lopburi, with the area between under constant Khmer occupation<sup>25</sup>). Both archaeological and epigraphical evidence suggests that the initial western penetration of the Khmer into the Lopburi region may actually have occurred in the reign of Rājēndravarman II (944-968)<sup>26</sup>). In the Beñ Vien inscription of 946, it is noted that Rājēndravarman was “victorious in combat against the powerful and wicked Rāmaṇya and Champa”<sup>27</sup>). Based on Burmese records which name the old Mon area at Pegu *Rāmaññadesa*, the Rāmaṇya in the Khmer inscription can perhaps be identified as that of the Mons of eastern Dvāravatī. Two inscriptions from Thailand’s Prachinburi province record activity in this area by Rājēndravarman II<sup>28</sup>). While information on a continuing relationship between the Khmer “core” and Lopburi is lacking, it appears that Sūryavarman I consolidated these earlier contacts by incorporating this western territory into the administrative structure of the Khmer empire<sup>29</sup>). An examination of the available inscriptions from Sūryavarman’s reign reflects the development of commercial communication between du Bourg’s “core” and the Lopburi area following this integration.

Mapping shows that commercial communication generally followed the river systems of the Khmer domain<sup>30</sup>). The main routes seem to

24) Du Bourg, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

25) Du Bourg, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

26) This is the opinion of Hiram W. Woodward, Jr., Visiting Instructor in the History of Art at the University of Michigan, who has discussed the tenth century evidence with the author.

27) *IC.*, 5, 97-104.

28) One was exhibited at the National Museum, Bangkok, in 1971; the other, from Aranna Pradesa district, was published in the Thai journal *Sinlapakon*, 16, 1 (May, 1972), pp. 61-65. This information has been generously supplied by Mr. Woodward.

29) George Coedès, *Recueil des inscriptions du Siam*, ii (Bangkok, 1961), pp. 13-15.

30) The author has constructed his map by plotting the locations of inscriptions which show clear evidence of commercial activity. Locations are based on E. Lunet de Lajonquière, “Carte archéologique de l’ancien Cambodge”, *Publications de l’école Française d’extrême-orient*, 9 (1911), insert.

radiate out from the Khmer “core” around the Great Lake (Tonle Sap). In the eastern part of the empire a major commercial route followed the Sen River north to Prāḥ Vihār. As previously noted, Prāḥ Vihār was the scene of intense religious and economic development in the reign of Sūryavarman <sup>31</sup>). From this point goods appear to have been carried across the Dangrek Range to commercial centers in the area of the Bān T’āt T’ong inscription <sup>32</sup>). This zone may also have had contacts with the Mekong communication network. In an inscription from Bān Thāt dating to the reign of Jayavarman VI (1080-1107), reference is given to “barges” which used the Mekong <sup>33</sup>). Vietnamese traders such as the *Yvan* of Kamvañ Tadiñ mentioned in the Phum Mien inscription (987) probably used a Mekong route to enter Cambodia <sup>34</sup>). To all appearances such traders came from Nghe-an through the Ha-trai pass and down the Mekong. That this would seem to be the case comes from the 1128 attacks on Viet Nam which followed this route. One of these attacks is even noted as having over seven hundred boats, which may be an indication of the extent of travel involved in the upstream area on the Vietnamese side <sup>35</sup>). Nghe-an in turn had contact with commercial developments of the Red River delta and the Vietnamese capital at Thang-long. It is possible that an overland route then connected Bān Thāt to Prāsāt Kantop, avoiding the Khong rapids south of Bān Thāt and allowing a more direct access to the Khmer “core”. Sambor (Sambhupura), located below the Khong rapids, seems to have been connected more to an eastern route than a western route, serving as a center for Khmer contact with hill peoples to the east who provided “slaves”, deer skins, and forest products to the Khmer <sup>36</sup>).

31) See note 4. For an idea of the geography of this area, see L. P. Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, (Philadelphia, 1951), p. 111, figure 19.

32) *IC.*, 7, pp. 94-98. 33) *BEFEO*, XII, p. 2. 34) *IC.*, 6, pp. 183-186.

35) *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, (henceforth *TT*), (Hanoi, 1967) I, pp. 263, 347. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Professor John K. Whitmore for the English translation of the Vietnamese chronicle. See also Henri Maspéro, “La frontière de l’Annam et du Cambodge”, *BEFEO*, 18, 3 (1918), pp. 29-36.

36) See Milton Osborne, “Notes on Early Cambodian Provincial History: Isanapura and Sambhupura”, *France-Asie/Asia*, 20, 4 (1966), p. 447.

An east-west route north of the Dangrek mountain range and following the Mun River system also developed in the time of Sūryavarman. Inscriptions from the Nom Van and P'imai areas which date to the latter years of Sūryavarman's reign (1040-1050) indicate that "goods from China" as well as many other commercial items were available in local markets<sup>37</sup>). L. P. Briggs credits Sūryavarman with bringing the upper Mun valley into the Khmer administrative structure, dating the foundation of three temples of this region—P'imai, Nom Van, and Phnom Rung—to his reign<sup>38</sup>). P'imai, which Briggs ranks with Lopburi in its importance to the Khmer, was the center for regional government in the northwest. A P'imai inscription (1041) makes reference to the syncretic Saivite cult with which Sūryavarman was associated<sup>39</sup>), a cult which was also known to have been established at Lopburi<sup>40</sup>). Commercial exchange between P'imai and Lopburi would have been made by overland transport. The integration of both areas into the Khmer empire was initiated by Sūryavarman and communication between the two western centers was probably desirable for its economic potential as well as for its political necessity<sup>41</sup>). By the late eleventh century, Khmer kings were coming from this northern region. Jayavarman VI (1081-1107) first appears in a Nom Van inscription (1082), directing many high civil and religious officials to supervise the local monastery<sup>42</sup>). The inscriptions of

37) *IC.*, 7, pp. 63-70.

38) Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-182.

39) *IC.*, 7, pp. 124-126. See de Mestier du Bourg's article for a discussion of Sūryavarman's relationship with this cult.

40) George Coedès, *Recueil des inscriptions du Siam*, ii, pp. 10-12.

41) Professor Woodward has called to the author's attention the P'imai (1041) inscription's use of the twelve year animal cycle associated with Thai rather than Khmer dating practice. The later development of a cultural center of the Thai speaking peoples in the Lopburi region may indicate the importance of these early communications between P'imai and Lopburi. An early nineteenth century Thai map shows a well developed road network connecting P'imai and Lopburi: see Victor Kennedy, "An Indigenous Early Nineteenth Century Map of Central and Northeast Thailand", in Tej Bunnag and M. Smithies, eds., *In Memoriam Phya Anuman Rajadhorn*, (Bangkok, 1970), pp. 315-348.

42) Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179.

Jayavarman and his immediate successors are concentrated in the northern areas of P'imai, Prāḥ Vihār, and Bān Thāt, making a strong case for the development of consistent communication via the Mun River during the reign of Sūryavarman I.

Epigraphy from the Battambang (Vāt Bāsēt) and Svay Chek (Bantāy Prāv) areas shows commerce passing through this region to Lopburi and the West. These two areas appear to have developed into major commercial centers in the reign of Sūryavarman I, suggesting that this was the main route to the West from the Khmer heartland <sup>43</sup>). Six of seven inscriptions of a commercial nature from these two temples date to Sūryavarman's reign, while the seventh, an inscription from the reign of Harṣavarman III (1071), is the latest inscription examined. The Vāt Bāsēt inscriptions record a filiation to the "chief of royal artisans", who was probably responsible for the construction of that temple under Sūryavarman <sup>44</sup>). At least eighteen merchants are identified in two inscriptions dated 1042; there is also reference to government supervision of weights and measures and recognition of royal agents who were surveying local commercial activity <sup>45</sup>). Cloth goods, including silk, and spices were among the goods being traded.

An inscription from Bantāy Prāv indicates the presence of a *vanik* from Vāt Bāsēt (Gaāñ Lampoh), suggesting that there was regular commercial intercourse between these two centers <sup>46</sup>). The epigraphy from Bantāy Prāv records visits by the royal retinues (*kamsten*) of Sūryavarman I and Harṣavarman III (1071) <sup>47</sup>). In the latter inscription, among those present was a man "of the caste from the West" (*varṇa anak pūrva*), who may be considered representative of the western

43) It is no coincidence that modern roads from the Great Lake region follow this same route via Battambang and Sisophon to Thailand. The distribution of Khmer temple inscriptions suggests that an overland route from the Sisophon-Svay Chek region also connected the P'imai-Nom Van area to the Khmer "core".

44) *IC.*, 3, pp. 3-11; Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 160, dates the construction of the temple to 1036, the date of this inscription.

45) *IC.*, 3, pp. 11-24.

46) *IC.*, 3, pp. 13, 60.

47) *IC.*, 3, pp. 57-64.

contacts of this Khmer center. *Khloñ jnvāl vanik* are very evident in each of these inscriptions, as opposed to *khloñ jnvāl*, indicating that Svay Chek was probably most important as a center of communication and exchange between the Khmer “core” and its western provinces. As opposed to this, in the Vāt Bāsēt inscriptions *khloñ jnvāl* (“local merchants”) dominate, suggesting that Battambang was more important as a local economic center.

### *Western Trade*

Such epigraphic evidence supports a conclusion that during the reign of Sūryavarman I, western trade routes developed and assumed an important economic position in the Khmer empire. Inscriptions reflect the incorporation of Lopburi into the administrative structure of the empire during Sūryavarman’s reign, but give little information on the economic interchange between Lopburi and the Khmer “core”<sup>48</sup>). However, control of Lopburi would have given the Khmer direct access to the trade routes of the Kra Isthmus. The Chaiya-Surat Thani area, which was known as “Trambralinga” (*Tan-liu-mei*) to the Chinese<sup>49</sup>), was an important commercial center. Mahayana Buddhist votive tablets of similar style and dating to the tenth and eleventh centuries have been found between Chaiya and Lopburi, indicating if not a cultural contact between the two areas, then at least communication<sup>50</sup>).

Past literature has presented Tambralinga as the scene of eleventh century conflict between the Srivijaya maritime empire and the expanding mainland power of the Khmer<sup>51</sup>). In response to an expansion of the Sung China consumer market in the late tenth century, Tambralinga is believed to have made an attempt to free itself from Srivijaya’s dominance. In 1001, a Tambralinga embassy brought a large

48) *Recueil des inscriptions du Siam*, ii, pp. 10-15.

49) As identified by O. W. Wolters, “Tambralinga”, *BSOAS*, XXI (1958), pp. 587-607.

50) Alastair Lamb, “Kedah and Takuapa: Some Tentative Historical Conclusions”, *Federated Museums Journal*, 6 (1961), p. 76.

51) L. P. Briggs, “The Khmer Empire and the Malay Peninsula”, *Far Eastern Quarterly*, IX, 3 (May, 1950), pp. 256-305; O. W. Wolters, *op. cit.*

quantity of sapanwood to China in an attempt to impress the Chinese with the quality and quantity of local products<sup>52</sup>). Embassies were also sent in 1014 and 1016, but in the latter year Tambralinga's hopes for recognition as a "first class" port were frustrated when the Chinese relegated the area to a "second class" status.

O. W. Wolters has interpreted these embassies as a reassurance to the Chinese in a time of internal disorder, thus linking them to the chaotic Khmer politics of the time<sup>53</sup>). This followed George Coedès' belief that the dynastic controversy surrounding Sūryavarman I's ascension to the Khmer throne involved the ruling family of Tambralinga. It had long been supposed that Tambralinga was the origin of an attempt against the Khmer throne in 1002 and, on the basis of this understanding, that the Tambralinga candidate, Sūryavarman I, was successful in seizing the throne<sup>54</sup>). In translating the Prāsāt Ben inscription (1008), however, Coedès suggested that Sūryavarman I was a Khmer and not, as he had earlier believed, a Malay prince from the Srivijayan dependency of Tambralinga. The Malay prince of Tambralinga, according to Coedès, was actually Sūryavarman's rival Jayaviravarman, whom Sūryavarman had finally expelled from the Khmer capital in 1008. Such a political connection between the Khmer and Tambralinga has yet to receive conclusive proof, although Chinese accounts from the Sung period considered Tambralinga to be within their pattern of geographical knowledge about Cambodia. The Chinese believed that mainland markets supplied Tambralinga with some of the best incense available<sup>55</sup>).

Archeological remains from the area between the Kra and Lopburi have provided little information on a commercial relationship. A Sūrya image found at Chaiya has been associated with the eleventh

52) Wolters, *op. cit.*, p. 595. Sapanwood was used as an incense.

53) *Ibid.*

54) *IC.*, 7, pp. 164-189. See also Briggs, "The Khmer Empire and the Malay Peninsula", *op. cit.*, p. 285.

55) Wolters, *op. cit.*, pp. 593-594, 600. See also F. Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, *Chau Ju-kua: his work on the Chinese and Arab trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi*, (St. Petersburg, 1911), pp. 31-33.

century style of the south Indian Chōla dynasty <sup>56</sup>). Other Chōla-style remains from the Vieng Sra area appear to date to the same tenth and eleventh century period, reflecting a trans-peninsula route between the west coast port of Takuapa and the Bay of Bandon <sup>57</sup>). Archeological research by Alastair Lamb has suggested that Takuapa was the terminus of the Arab-Persian trade until the mid-eleventh century when it was shifted to the Kedah coast <sup>58</sup>). “Kalah” was the center of this Arab-Persian trade, while Srivijaya-Palembang was the center of China trade. Kalah’s ability to handle the trade of two worlds was the source of its importance. The Arabs knew it as a place where a large amount of profit could be made, a fact reflected in the quantity and quality of artifacts found there. A Khmer presence in the Surat Thani area would have given the mainland commercial networks further access to the international China market as well as this western market of Persian and Indian goods.

The presence of “goods from China” at Nom Van in Sūryavarman’s reign might indicate the commercial importance of these new “western contacts” <sup>59</sup>). As the epigraphy shows, tenth century “goods from China” had entered the Khmer “core” from the eastern part of the domain. In the Tuol Pei inscription, the royal family requested that the district chief of an eastern commercial center acquire goods from a China trader <sup>60</sup>). The activities of Vietnamese and Cham merchants in the Khmer “core” are recorded in the eastern Phum Mien inscription of 987 <sup>61</sup>). Other tenth century inscriptions of a commercial nature are concentrated in this eastern direction, but those of Sūryavarman’s reign reverse this with a western concentration. While this proliferation

<sup>56</sup>) Stanley J. O’Connor, *Hindu Gods of Peninsular Siam*, (Ascona, 1972), pp. 60-62, and figure 34.

<sup>57</sup>) David Wyatt has told the author of a Ligor Chronicle reference to a Tamil inscription from Songkhla dated 983. In this account, a monk states that he is copying this inscription, which records an overland route to the west coast.

<sup>58</sup>) Alastair Lamb, “Takuapa: The Probable Site of a Pre-Malaccan Entrepot in the Malay Peninsula”, in John Bastin and R. Roolvink, eds., *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, (Oxford, 1964), pp. 76-86.

<sup>59</sup>) *IC.*, 7, pp. 63-70.

<sup>60</sup>) Aymonier, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

<sup>61</sup>) *IC.*, 6, pp. 183-186.

is a reflection of Sūryavarman's interest in extending Khmer administration into the western provinces, there are strong commercial implications as well. Khmer control over Lopburi provided access to the international trade routes. As a result, "goods from China" might well have reached Nom Van via Tambralinga and Lopburi, rather than from the east. Such a direct interaction with the international routes would have helped to generate the internal development of the Khmer economy in Sūryavarman's time.

*The Puttūr Plates of Rājendra Chōla I*

The Puttūr copper plate inscription of the south Indian king Rājendra Chōla I (1012-1044), has perplexed historians with its reference to gifts made to the Chōla king by the "King of Kāmbōja"<sup>62</sup>). It is generally accepted that this "King of Kāmbōja" is the Khmer king of the mainland Southeast Asia state of Cambodia and not the king of Kāmbhōja in northwestern India, an area with which the Chōlas did not have contact<sup>63</sup>). This position is reinforced by the context of the inscription itself, in which the Kaṭāha (Srivijaya) expedition of Rājendra is also mentioned. Here the "King of Kāmbōja" is distinct from his contemporary the Srivijaya king of Kaṭāha. Since the inscription makes reference to the Srivijaya raid which took place in 1025, the copper plates looked back to the eighth year of Rājendra (1020) in reference to the gift made by the Kāmbōja king, probably to set the scene for the 1025 effort.

In the inscription, the King of Kāmbōja is said to have sent his chariot as a present to Rājendra in order to win the friendship of the Chōla king and "thereby save his own kingdom"<sup>64</sup>). South Asian historians, identifying this reference as a record of a request for Chōla aid, have interpreted it to be a Khmer response to a threat from Kaṭāha (Srivijaya) military pressure<sup>65</sup>). The date of the gift would correspond

62) *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, (Henceforth *ARE.*) (1949-1950), pp. 3-5.

63) *Ibid.*, p. 4.

64) *Ibid.*

65) R. C. Majumdar, "The Overseas Expeditions of King Rajendra Cola", *Artibus Asiae*, XXIV (1962), pp. 338-342.

to the strongest period of Srivijaya's control over the Straits trade route. In 1016/17, the Srivijaya armies had destroyed the eastern Javanese *kraton*, temporarily averting Javanese trade competition, and the Srivijaya ruler consequently referred to himself when he sent a richly laden mission to China in the following year as the "king of the ocean lands" <sup>66</sup>). In this interpretation, Rājendra's raid on Srivijaya has been regarded as an attempt by the Chōla to eliminate Srivijaya's control of the Malacca Straits commercial route to China. It is noteworthy that in 1016, when the Chinese designated Tambralinga a "second class" port, "first class" economic status was bestowed upon the Chōla, the Arabs, Srivijaya, and Java. The next ten years has been seen as a period of competition among these "first class" powers of South and Southeast Asia for dominance over the China trade.

George Coedès connected the Khmer request for Chōla aid to the internal politics of the Angkorian empire. In doing so, he noted the statement of the Prāsāt Ben inscription, that Jayaviravarman's "universal glory was not destroyed by the times. Although beaten, he remained stable on the earth . . ." <sup>67</sup>). Elaborating on this statement, Coedès suggested that the gift of the "king of Kāmbōja" in the Puttūr plates corresponded in time to a Khmer military campaign into the Chao Phraya river valley and was Sūryavarman I's request for Chōla aid against his rival Jayaviravarman and Tambralinga. Faced with a possible Chōla-Khmer alliance, Tambralinga turned for aid to Srivijaya. In Coedès' view, the result of this complicated diplomacy was the Chōla raid, which, as expressed in the famous Tanjore inscription of 1030, was directed at Srivijaya and its ports—one of which was Tambralinga (Mādāmalingam) <sup>68</sup>). Completing his argument, Coedès stated that the Chōla expedition led to the reintroduction of Khmer influence in the isthmian region during the second quarter of the century.

Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence that Sūryavarman's troops

66) O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, (Ithaca, New York, 1967), p. 251.

67) *IC.*, 7, pp. 164-189.

68) *South Indian Inscriptions*, II, 1, pp. 105-109; for the English translation see K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *History of Srivijaya*, (Madras, 1949), p. 80.

moved further south than Lopburi where the western-most inscriptions of his reign, dating 1022-1025, appear <sup>69</sup>). While both the discussed interpretations stress that the Khmer gift was a request for military aid, the Khmer epigraphy suggests a third alternative: that the gift of the Kāmbōja king Sūryavarman I can be viewed as a culmination of Cambodia's tenth and eleventh century economic development.

As expressed in a recent thesis by George W. Spencer, the Chōla thought of themselves as military heroes <sup>70</sup>). Spencer considers the Chōla raid into Southeast Asia as an extension of a plunder dynamic of military conquest. In his analysis of the Tanjore inscription, he points out two themes which accompany the reference to the capture of Srivijaya on the 1025 raid. Of the thirteen place-names, eight are accompanied by phrases suggesting natural or artificial strength of a military nature; only Srivijaya-Palembang is mentioned for its treasure, in the form of its jewelled gates.

In other words, the dominant impression is one of military strength, rather than one of riches, which constituted a primary theme in ancient Indian literature. The simplest reason for this change in emphasis is, of course, that those ports, whether politically united or not, had in fact developed strong military establishments by Chola times, and that this impressed an Indian kingdom which so greatly emphasized the same instrument <sup>71</sup>).

This same tendency of stressing the role of the military can be seen in the Puttūr plate inscription: the gift of the Kāmbōja king is depicted as a request for military aid.

Reference to a second gift to Rājendra Chōla from the Kāmbōja king appears in an inscription of Kulōttuṅga Chōla I (1070-1122), which was found in Chidambaram of the South Arcot district <sup>72</sup>). The inscription records that Rājendra I placed a stone in the temple which he had received from the "Kāmbōja-rāja". The stone had been

69) See the "Chronological List of Khmer Inscriptions", *IC.*, 8.

70) George W. Spencer, "Royal Leadership and Imperial Conquest in Medieval South India: The Naval Expedition of Rajendra Chola I, c. 1025 A. D.", Ph. D. dissertation, University of California (Berkeley), 1967.

71) *Ibid.*, p. 196. Quoted with Professor Spencer's permission.

72) *ARE.*, 119 of 1888; the text is published in *Epigraphia Indica*, 5, p. 105.

shown to Rājendra as a curiosity (*kāṭci*); there is no mention of a request for military aid in return. The author suggests that this second inscription depicts the true nature of the gift in the Puttūr inscription, that the Khmer king sent a chariot and this stone as “curiosities”, to “win the friendship” of the Chōḷa in an economic rather than a military sense.

It is the author’s belief that the gifts given to Rājendra by Sūryavarman were not intended to “save his own kingdom”, but to establish a friendly trade relationship between Cambodia and Chōḷa ports. Another example of a reinterpretation of Khmer activities may be seen in Vietnamese texts which record eight Khmer contacts with the Vietnamese court at Thang-long through the middle of the eleventh century <sup>73</sup>). In each case, the Vietnamese court regarded these contacts as “tribute missions”, in the same sense that the Chōḷa regarded the Khmer king’s presents as “appeals for aid”. Interpretation of Sūryavarman’s diplomatic missions seems to have depended on the recipient’s point of view. Sūryavarman’s first “tribute mission” to the Vietnamese court was sent in 1012, almost immediately after his definitive installation in 1011 <sup>74</sup>). One purpose of this initial “mission” may have been to insure the security of the old commercial routes to Vietnam. By 1020, Sūryavarman was also seeking new commercial ties to the west.

Cambodia was not the only state seeking a commercial relationship with the Chōḷas in this historical period, as is evidenced in several inscriptions from the official Chōḷa port in Nāgapaṭṭinam. The relationship of the Srivijaya monarchs to the Nāgapaṭṭinam Buddhist vihāra is depicted in the well-known “Leiden Grants”. These record Rājarāja Chōḷa I’s endowment of land to support the construction of the vihāra in the name of a Srivijayan monarch in 1006 and Kulōttuṅga I’s renewal

73) *TT.* (Hanoi), pp. 193, 195, 197, 198, 199, 209, 216, 230. The Khmer sent missions to the Vietnamese court in 1012, 1014, 1020, 1025, 1026, 1033, 1039, and 1056.

74) In 1011, Sūryavarman administered an oath of fidelity upon his subordinates, insuring their personal loyalty to him and legitimizing his succession. See du Bourg, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-293.

of the grant in 1090<sup>75</sup>). There are three additional inscriptions from Nāgapattinam which date from the same period as the Kāmbōja king's gifts. In 1015-1019, gifts of lamps, jewels set with precious stones, and "China gold" (*Chīnakkanakam*) were presented by individuals who referred to themselves as "agents (*kanmi*) of the king of Srivijaya"<sup>76</sup>).

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that such gifts were designed to further commercial aspirations. These contacts by the Khmer and Srivijaya rulers may well have been an immediate response to the Chinese decision in 1016, to bestow "first class" economic status upon the Chōla: both were attempting to establish regular commercial intercourse with the "first class" Chōla ports. The development of the Cambodian economy in the tenth and eleventh centuries as reflected in the Khmer epigraphy strongly suggests that the gift of the Kāmbōja king Sūryavarman I was intended to establish a flow of trade from south Indian ports to the Southeast Asian mainland via the Kra Isthmus and the Surat Thani area. Goods would have been transported north from the Kra to Lopburi, where they would have followed the two exchange networks which developed in Sūryavarman's reign. The first entered the Khmer "core" in the Sisophon area; the second encompassed the region north of the Dangrek mountain range, with a tie to the Khmer "core" at Prāh Vihār and a possible connection to the Mekong in the east. Under Sūryavarman's rule, the commercial economy of early medieval Cambodia achieved such importance that the upper Malay peninsula receded from the patterns of power and trade in the island world and was drawn into those of the mainland. The contacts of this area came to lie not with the international trade route, but with a more local route which went across the Bay of Bengal

75) *ARE*. (1961-1962), Copper Plates 38 and 39; the texts are published in *Epigraphia Indica*, 22, pp. 213-281. The "Larger Leiden Grant" records a royal grant by Rājārāja of the entire revenues from a village to provide for worship and other expenses in the vihāra at Nāgapattinam which was erected by Chūlāmaṇivarman, the Kidārattaraiyan (i.e. the king of Srivijaya). The "Smaller Leiden Grant" renews this grant in Kulōttuṅga's twentieth year. Apparently the earlier grant had been ignored for some time, since Kulōttuṅga's renewal states that certain people who were occupying the previously granted lands were to be evicted.

76) *ARE*., 161, 164, and 166 of 1956-57.

to south India and Sri Lanka<sup>77</sup>). This pattern of communications situated the western and central sections of the Southeast Asian mainland in a cultural relationship of great significance to later centuries.

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77) See Kenneth R. Hall and John K. Whitmore, "Southeast Asian Trade and the Isthmian Struggle, 1000-1200 A. D.", in Kenneth R. Hall, ed., *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History*, I, (Ann Arbor, 1975).